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An outline of West Seneca  
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**AN OUTLINE OF  
WEST SENECA HISTORY**

**PART ONE**

PART 1 of this Outline of West Seneca History gives the reader an understanding of various events that serve as an introduction to our story. It covers a period of Indian occupation up to the year 1798.

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PART 2. "Reservation Days" (1798-1842) is descriptive of life and events on the Buffalo Creek Reservation.

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PART 3. "The Ebenezer Society" (1842-1864) tells of settlement here by the Community of True Inspiration.

**AN OUTLINE OF  
WEST SENECA HISTORY**

by

**FRANK J. LANKES**

WEST SENECA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
919 MILL ROAD

WEST SENECA, NEW YORK

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## In The Beginning

Geologists inform us that Western New York once supported an immense burden of glacial ice; and there is some lack of agreement among them as to how such ice could have accumulated and spread over so vast a region in our temperate zone. One explanation is that more snow fell in winter than could melt in summer and that as the glacier gained altitude the weight exerted such pressure that the lower ice and boulders were forced outward to move slowly to the south, grinding to earth all growth that was encountered.

Was our land then occupied — were there villages and cities? We'll never know but can readily believe that if such was the case they were abandoned before the ice destroyed them. And when did all this occur? We are now informed that according to radio carbon dating the last glacial era in this region ended about eleven thousand years ago. As ice melted glacial lakes were formed and our town once lay below the surface of such a body of water, the remaining evidence of which is now named Lake Erie.

No knowledge is to be gained by guessing when mankind settled here after retreat of the glacier. We know only that they were primitive stone age people who came up from the south, that they followed the easiest course of travel which was the rivers. In the case of Iroquois ethnic groups, it is believed that they came up Ohio Valley and gradually spread out as they neared Lake Erie, some moving up tributary streams which brought them to northern Ohio, western Pennsylvania and New York; others crossed Detroit River into Canada and settled in what is now Ontario; of that division some continued eastward through Ontario, crossed St. Lawrence River and traveled southward to occupy the Mohawk Valley region of New York.

People of Iroquoian stock inhabiting the territory given above were Hurons, Neutrals, Eries, Wenroes, Andastes,

Senecas, Cayugas, Onondagas, Oneidas and Mohawks. There was sporadic warfare among them before formation of the Confederacy.

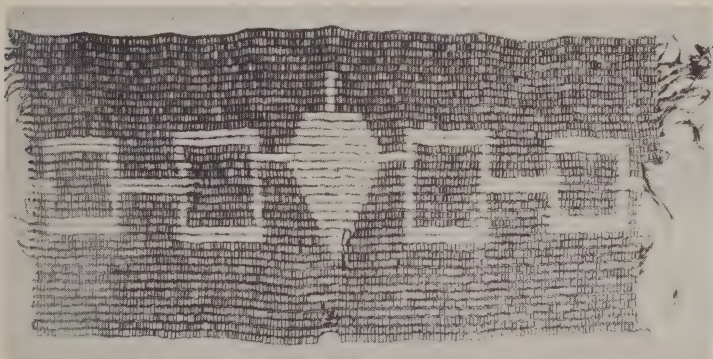
The idea to unite all for the preservation of peace originated with Deganawidah. He passed through Iroquoian towns teaching a doctrine of unity and presenting it as a longhouse in which many families could live in harmony under a great binding law. Tradition gives the names of three principals involved in organizing the Iroquois Confederacy; they were Deganawida, Atotarho and Hayo-went-ha (erroneously named Hiawatha by the poet Longfellow).

Much has been written in prose and poetry on the subject of the Leagues inception, all of it founded in tradition and some of it misleading, the most implausible being Longfellow's "Song of Hiawatha." Of one point we can be fairly certain, that the organization was accomplished before the first white settlers arrived here from Europe. A reasonable chronological solution seems to be in an old Mohawk tradition that tells of the sun "going out" (eclipse) while arguments in favor of confederation were being heard, and that the phenomenon was accepted as an omen favoring unity. The event occurred on a summer day "when the grass was knee high or the corn getting ripe."

Astronomers give us the dates of five total solar eclipses visible from central New York since beginning of our Christian era. They were in the years A.D. 258, 664, 1451, 1806, and 1925. Our choice is naturally for 1451, the others being either too early or too late. The solar eclipse of 1451 occurred on June 28, "when the grass was about knee high."

History names five original nations of Longhouse people: Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas. The Onondagas were "Keepers of the Council Fire", Mohawks "Keepers of the Eastern Door" of the Longhouse, and Senecas "Keepers of the Western Door." Their covenant was sym-

bolized by a wampum known as the Hiawatha Belt which is shown here and described in New York State Museum Bulletin 279 as one of the most important and valuable wampums in existence.



*Courtesy of New York State Museum*

It resembles a beaded mat  $21\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length and  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches (or 38 beads) in width. The central symbol with point downward represents the Heart of the Confederacy and also the central position of the council fire with the Onondaga nation. Linked to it are four hollow squares representing Mohawks, Oneidas, Cayugas and Senecas. When the belt is held with the heart upward, the symbol becomes the Tree of Light under which all dwell in peace.

The beads are tubular in form, the dark being purple in color and made from the dark spot seen on the inside of clam shells; white beads were made from conch shell. In their treaty councils our Indians frequently used the expression "chain of friendship" between principals; the linked units of the design are symbolic of such a chain.

Considering the veneration we now have for the Hiawatha Belt and how well it is protected in our Congressional Library at Washington, it seems strange to us that only a

little more than a hundred years ago the custodian of that wampum lived in West Seneca. His home was in the Onondaga Village that once occupied the hill on the northerly side of Cazenovia Creek at the junction of Ridge Road and Seneca Street and his name was Ut-ha-wa, a chief generally known as Captain Cold. We'll never know the exact location of his cabin, surely a primitive and humble home but in its time the repository of a relic that has since become a priceless national treasure.

Those ragged ends of the belt cutting across the end chain links are suggestive of an incomplete design. Were there originally additional symbols representing other member nations? We cannot answer that now. Iroquois people outside the Confederacy were Hurons, Neutrals, Eries, Wenroes, and Andastes. It is said that out of jealousy the Hurons allied themselves with neighboring Algonquins to war on their own kind within the Longhouse. Hurons also made an alliance with the French who became involved in a skirmish with Mohawks at Ticonderoga on July 6, 1609.

In that affair Samuel Champlain with two soldiers and sixty Hurons attacked two hundred Mohawks and routed them. That was the first Mohawk experience against gunfire and they were demoralized by the mystery and the power of such weapons. In 1610 there was another Huron-French engagement against the Longhouse which ended disastrously for the confederated Iroquois who had no weapons to match the equipment of their adversaries. Neither Hurons nor French were then aware of it but the consequences of those two acts of aggression were to prove fatal for them.

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We interrupt here to bring the Wenroes into the story. They are said to have been a small separated group allied with, and protected somewhat by, the Neutrals. Dr. Frederick Houghton tells us there were four prehistoric Indian towns of Wenroe culture in our immediate vicinity: one at Indian

Church Road and Fields Avenue, another on the Schaub and Eaton farms on Seneca Street at the west end of Center Road, a third on Potter Road in what was West Seneca but is now Cazenovia Park in Buffalo, and a fourth at the foot of Fenton Street a short distance in Clinton Street from the City Line. Not all writers agree on that, and some give those sites to Neutral occupation. Be that as it may, Houghton excavated the Fields Avenue location and we'll accept his analysis as authoritative until it is proven otherwise. His examination of those other places given was not so thorough but there was sufficient evidence to convince him they were of prehistoric Wenro occupation. For reasons long unknown Neutral support was withdrawn from the Wenroes, leaving them a helpless minority at the mercy of any aggressor of superior numbers. Perhaps we now have a theory that supplies a motive for that abandonment

The confederated Iroquois could not compete against the Huron-French-Algonquin combination on grounds of equality without firearms. About the year 1613 a party of Dutch settled at what is now Albany and established trading facilities. With beaver peltry the Longhouse people could then buy guns, powder and lead. There was a beaver ground in our town, early Buffalo settlers reported it as lying between the Indian Church and Sulphur Springs. That places it on Swamp Brook which flows between the Lehigh Valley Railroad embankment and Madison Wire works in Winchester. History does not say the Wenroes were attacked, but that they were threatened. Did the Senecas demand their removal from the vicinity of the beaver ground? That could explain the action of the Neutrals if based upon a desire to keep out of involvement with the Senecas. This is only theoretical.

Wenro representatives traveled to the Hurons in Canada and appealed for sanctuary with those people. It was granted and in 1639 those unfortunate tribesmen packed what they

could carry and made a sorrowful march to a new home. En-route they were overtaken by an epidemic of which many died. Toward the end of their journey they were so heart-broken, ill, and exhausted that their new friends in compassion helped them over final stages of the trail. Jesuit missionaries reported their arrival but their fate was a tragic one; sanctuary with Hurons was but a ten-year reprieve from vengeance of the Iroquois.

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Detailed accounts of Iroquois wars are of no local historical value. They destroyed the Huron, Neutral, Erie, and Andaste nations. Peace was their objective and it was achieved but at a heavy cost. Although those people mentioned were destroyed as nations, hundreds were brought to the Longhouse as captives and adopted into the league. Descendants of a Neutral captive now living among the Senecas have the name of Kenjockety.

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Now we should endeavor to re-create the local scene as it was when Wenroes occupied the Schaub and Eaton settlement. Throughout New York State there was a similarity in arrangement of Indian villages and any example recorded by early explorers will serve in this instance. The dwellings were primitive apartment houses having a framework of poles covered with overlapping layers of bark, elm bark was used in places where it was found in good supply. After removal from the tree it was laid in shallow water and weighted with heavy stones to soak until the rough outer surface had been softened; it was then removed by scraping and the bark made suitable for use.

The poles were slender pliable saplings; two were laid together with the tips overlapping and tied securely with tough bark fibers then bent to form an inverted letter "U." Those frames were erected at intervals and held together by horizontal poles to which several layers of bark sheathing

were attached. When applied vertically, or in the manner of growth on the tree, the bark curled; but when fastened in horizontal layers it remained flat.

Those houses were long and narrow having a wide central aisle flanked on either side by small compartments of sleeping platforms raised about knee high above the earth floor. The compartments were curtained with skins; each had an upper platform for the storage of household gear, weapons, snowshoes, rolls of tanned skins, etc. Occasionally sleeping was done up there.

At intervals down the aisle were shallow depressions scooped out of the earth and used as fireplaces for cooking. Directly over each was a smoke hole in the roof equipped with an adjustable bark cover. Suspended from poles under the roof were braids of Indian corn, strings of dried beans and sliced dried squash, and strips of dried venison. Each house was in charge of a clan mother and was the home of members of her clan — deer, turtle, wolf, etc., and projecting over the entrance was a roughly made image of the clan totem.

Some villages were surrounded by a stockade of poles. Two poles tied together at the top and spread at the base comprised a unit; they were stacked side by side in the manner of books on a shelf. To complete a project of such proportions required a great deal of gnawing and scratching with ragged stones for the only cutting tools available were made of chipped flint. All around the inside of the stockade a stack of firewood was piled to make an observation platform and an elevation from which the place could be defended; although it provided a measure of protection the real defense was in vigilance and fighting prowess. Outside the stockade land was cleared for growing corn, beans and squash. Wild foods requiring no cultivation were pond lily roots, cattail roots, mushrooms, leeks, and a variety of nuts and berries.

Life in such an environment was a continuous struggle

for survival against the forces of nature, starvation, and disease. Surrounded in our pleasant homes with labor-saving appliances and devices for relaxation and entertainment it should be difficult for us now to imagine the degree of stamina required of those people merely to keep alive.

After liquidation of Huron, Neutral, Erie, and Andaste nations the Niagara Frontier came under Seneca jurisdiction. According to Houghton they moved in about the year 1670, occupying the old Wenro village site on Potter Road known as the Hart Farm; and later, about 1700, the site at the foot of Fenton Street. A letter written in 1864 by Nicholson Parker, an educated Seneca, tells us that the first settlement of Indians was at the salt lick in Buffalo Creek, a short distance upstream from Sulphur Springs. Parker does not identify those Indians but tells that soon after settlement the "French came among them," and that the village was destroyed either by French or British in their wars. He adds that when the Indians later returned they found great quantities of French beads among the ashes. (Ellicott's map of the Morris Purchase, dated 1800, locates an Indian settlement at the confluence of Cayuga and Buffalo creeks.)

Reference to settlement and to French beads at that place has had some support in recent years. While excavating for the cellar of his house on Clinton Street near Harlem Road the late John Roesch uncovered a grave containing four skeletons, a brass kettle, some vermilion grease paint, and a gun with the wood stock rotted away. The gunbarrel was filled with beads — Houghton examined the grave — the beads were of French manufacture. The Roesch house has been removed and a Loblaw market now occupies the site.

Our war for independence from England was directly responsible for the final movement of Indians into our region. At the beginning of hostilities the confederated Iroquois pledged neutrality but that pledge was broken at the Battle of Oriskany. Having committed themselves by active partici-



pation on that occasion (the Senecas especially) they could not disengage from a British alliance and were active in the war to its conclusion — that is to say the Senecas, Cayugas, Onondagas and Mohawks — some Oneida and Tuscarora people aided the Colonial cause.

The only awareness West Seneca had of that war was passage of prisoners through here on their way to Fort Niagara. Some of those were marched over a trail that began at Genesee River, passed up Wiscoy Creek, crossed a divide into Cattaraugus Valley, crossed another divide to meet the headwaters of Cazenovia Creek which was followed down to Buffalo Creek, Lake Erie and Niagara River to Fort Niagara.

Raiding parties of Indians and Tory Rangers so hampered the Colonial struggle for freedom that plans were made for a showdown fight with the Indians in their own country. General John Sullivan was given command of a small army having a detachment of artillery that drove the Indians and their Tory allies from the Genesee Valley and Finger Lakes region, burned their houses, cut down orchards, destroyed standing crops and slaughtered all livestock. Thousands of refugees of both sexes and all ages fled to Fort Niagara for protection.

At that time the Fort was in short supply and unable to provide rations for all in the emergency. The Commandant urged some to take passage in a vessel for Montreal but they would not. Encamped near the Fort they experienced a terrible winter in which many died of hunger and exposure. In the spring of 1780 members of the garrison brought some refugees to Buffalo Creek by boat, helped them to build cabins and clear land, supplied them with seed and tools and so began the final re-settlement of Buffalo Creek by Indians. Not all the Niagara refugees came here — some returned to Genesee Valley — their warriors continued active in border fighting until the close of the war.

In 1780 the Hart Farm location (now in Cazenovia

Park) was again occupied. The Indian name for it was "Tga-non-da-ga-yos-hah", meaning Old Village. Other old sites re-occupied were at Fields Avenue and Indian Church Road, and at the foot of Fenton Street.

Onondagas were settled on Cazenovia Creek at what is now the junction of Seneca Street and Ridge Road. That was the village of Chief Big Sky—the Indian name was "I-o-sio-ha". Farther up the creek near Transit Road was a Stockbridge community named "Sha-ga-nah-gah-geh", interpreted as "Place of the Stockbridges". Jack Berrytown, or Jackstown, was larger than any other settlement but we are not now able to decide whether that referred to territory or population. In published accounts there is a confusing application of the name designating both Gardenville and Blossom and the land between those places. Cayugas made their home along Cayuga Creek and finally there was Old Smokes Village at the forks of Smokes Creek in what is now Lackawanna. Some Delawares also located along that Creek, a chief of theirs being named Captain Smoke.

It was at Fort Stanwix in 1784, three years after hostilities ended, that United States commissioners and Iroquois chiefs met to arrange a treaty. We shall omit conditions involving Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas and Tuscaroras and consider the treaty only as it affected Seneca territory. The north and south boundaries of Seneca land, as arranged at that conference, were the shore of Lake Ontario and the Pennsylvania state line respectively. On the east the line extended from a point on Sodus Bay directly south to Pennsylvania; and on the west from the mouth of Buffalo Creek southward to Pennsylvania.

As we evaluate real estate today that was an immense tract but the Senecas considered it an outrageous curtailment and protested. They were reminded that they had violated a solemn pledge of neutrality in the late war and as conquered aggressors must expect punishment for destruction

of American life and property. They were compelled by circumstances to submit. There was no alternative.

Although embittered by terms forced upon them at Fort Stanwix, a situation far more formidable and deadly to their interest was soon to develop at the hands of a group of commissioners representing both the States of New York and Massachusetts. Those commissioners were to become involved in a conference held to determine which state was to have territorial jurisdiction over Indian lands in Western New York. The meeting was held at Hartford, Connecticut, in 1786 and the problem was settled there. That problem had its origin in a grant made by King Charles of England to the Plymouth Colony in 1628; the grant extended Massachusetts from the Atlantic seaboard clear across the continent to the Pacific Ocean.

However, in 1664 Charles granted to his brother James, Duke of York, the land in Eastern New York which England had recently hijacked from Holland. Massachusetts claimed Western New York by reason of the Plymouth Charter and New York claimed it because the Indians who owned the land had been dependent upon New York. An agreement was reached whereby New York was to have jurisdiction and Massachusetts was to have pre-emptive right — which is to say the right of first purchase when the Indians decided to sell.

That compromise seems harmless to us but for the Indians it was the work of the devil, and they never understood it. Speculators made bids for that pre-emptive right and the State of Massachusetts sold it for one million dollars to a syndicate headed by Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham — final payment to be made in Massachusetts currency within three years from date of purchase.

Having acquired the right of primary purchase Phelps and Gorham immediately pressured the Senecas for a sale of some of their land and to that end they arranged for a

council to be held at Buffalo Creek in 1788.

According to terms of the Hartford compromise, Massachusetts was to have a commissioner present at any sale of Indian land that came within scope of the agreement and in this case the commissioner was the reverent Samuel Kirkland, a missionary who had spent years among the Oneidas and in whom the Senecas had confidence. He arrived at Buffalo Creek in June of 1788 and held council with the chiefs on the prospect of a sale; he also prepared a census of Indians living here and did a little probing in the missionary field. In that latter department he found the Senecas unreceptive. The census was the first taken in this region, it is incomplete but we now have a copy.

Mr. Phelps came along presently and in the councils that followed a sale was arranged by which Phelps and Gorham were to receive title to 2,600,000 acres of land for the sum of five thousand dollars, half of which was to be paid in trade goods and the balance with Massachusetts currency — worth only twenty percent of its face value at that time. In addition the Senecas were to receive an annuity of five hundred dollars to be paid forever.

On August 1, 1789, the sale was consummated at Canandaigua and two years later Phelps and Gorham defaulted in all payments to the Indians and to Massachusetts. Had the transaction been made on pay-off in currency for the full amount of five thousand dollars and the money equally divided among all the Senecas, they would have received less than a dollar each, a dollar then having the purchasing power of twenty cents. So for the value of less than twenty cents to each individual Seneca title to 2,600,000 acres of New York land passed to a syndicate of speculators; during negotiations for that sale the chiefs repeatedly appealed to Kirkland for advice and guidance.

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While a purchase of Indian land was being negotiated

here border fighting started in Ohio which attracted attention of the local Senecas and soon involved some of their warriors. The trouble out there was brought about by aggressive white people settling on Indian land before it had been released by the natives. Although warned by United States Commissioners to keep out until title could be secured, thousands of impatient settlers crossed the Ohio River and squatted on any land they pleased to occupy. Neither protests by Indians nor orders from federal commissioners brought a halt to the movement which resulted in another bloody border war. General St. Clair was sent to the frontier by Congress to organize a defense for our people but being unaccustomed to wilderness campaigning he was decisively whipped by the Indians.

Since it was known that Senecas and others from Buffalo Creek were active in the fighting President Washington sent a representative here to conciliate them, to have them remain neutral and to use their influence in persuading Ohio nations to stop fighting until a satisfactory settlement could be arranged by treaty.

That representative was Colonel Thomas Proctor; he came to Buffalo Creek in 1791 and proposed that a group of Iroquois chiefs accompany him to Ohio for arrangement of a peace conference. He received no encouragement from the chiefs and it was only upon insistence of the women that they agreed to go. Proctor applied to the British Commandant at Fort Niagara for a vessel to transport his mission to Ohio, but the charter was refused and he was compelled to abandon the assignment. While here he was feasted by Chief Big Sky at the Onondaga Village, the dinner consisted chiefly of boiled and stewed squab. He reported that the settlement contained about twenty-eight cabins in good repair:

Having failed to win local support on the first try President Washington invited a delegation of chiefs to visit Philadelphia which was then our national Capital. Missionary

Kirkland delivered the message and it was accepted; the number of chiefs who made the journey has been given variously as forty, fifty and sixty. They arrived in Philadelphia near the middle of March in 1792 and at the conference agreed to go as emissaries to the warring Ohio tribes. But so reluctant were they to act that it was not until September that they set out to do so. They were successful and returned to Buffalo Creek in November of 1792 with the word that the hostile tribes would treat with American commissioners at the Rapids of Miami River the following spring and that a truce would be observed until then.

The new Indian Commission was headed by General Benjamin Lincoln and included Colonel Timothy Pickering and Mr. Beverly Randolph. General Lincoln journeyed by way of Buffalo Creek, lodged here in an Indian cabin for a night, witnessed an Indian ceremonial dance, and left on the day following for Fort Niagara where he was joined by the others. After a delay spent in fitting out with provisions and trade goods and in chartering a vessel from the British at Fort Erie, they sailed for the head of Lake Erie and anchored at the mouth of Detroit River. A number of local chiefs served as escort; those chiefs were accustomed to the use of broadcloth for garments but on that occasion they traveled in buckskins.

It should be understood that while the armistice was being observed by both sides the Indians were considering plans for a confederation of all tribes to resist further white encroachment on Indian lands. General Lincoln was to treat with them for a price of the territory then under armed dispute, but when the conference at the Rapids convened the American Commissioners were astounded to learn that they would not be permitted to attend personally, that a report of the final decision would be brought to them by messenger. The report was negative; the Indians decided that Ohio River was to be the boundary between Indian country and

United States. So the Commissioners and their Indian escort, with bales of goods unopened, sailed down Lake Erie for home. Hostilities were resumed.

With the return of Buffalo Creek chiefs a meeting was called to hear their report. Chief Big Sky kindled a council fire at our local Onondaga Village on October 8, 1793, and the council opened with the usual Indian ritualistic formalities. General Chapin, United States Indian Agent, and Colonel Butler, representing British interests, were both present. Chief Farmers Brother, who had accompanied General Lincoln, brought greetings and messages from twenty-seven western tribes and reported also that Mohawk Chief Joseph Brant would be along to give complete details of the Miami conference.

Brant arrived on the following day. There we had two of the most hated people of our Revolutionary War border fighting, Brant and Butler, attending to business on the bank of Cazenovia Creek, a colorful and dramatic occasion on one of our fine October days. Hated and maligned though they had been, both had gentle and humane qualities — the fault is not so much with people in war as it is in the fact that war itself is hell.

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After defeat of St. Clair President Washington sent General Anthony Wayne to Ohio to recruit and train for a finish fight, if necessary. And after failure of the Lincoln Mission efforts were continued to keep the Iroquois neutral. That assignment gravitated to Colonel Pickering; there was a disturbing belief that the Senecas would throw in with their Ohio friends and take up the hatchet against the new border settlements in New York and Pennsylvania.

Pickering succeeded in negotiating for a conference at Canandaigua, New York, in the fall of 1794; a meeting that was attended by about 1800 Iroquois warriors and chiefs armed and ready for war. The colonel was earnest in his

appeals for their neutrality; and the Indians had a real respect for his courage and integrity.

He had a treaty he wanted them to consider seriously, a document signed by President Washington and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson. Now, by the Fort Stanwix Treaty, the west boundary of Seneca territory was a line drawn from the mouth of Buffalo Creek south to the Pennsylvania border. By this new treaty the United States would extend that territory westward so as to include the balance of land remaining in New York State to the shore of Lake Erie. While in council a runner arrived with news from Ohio. The force commanded by General Wayne had engaged the hostile Indians at Fallen Timbers on the Maumee River and had beaten and routed them. The message favored Pickering's efforts and he succeeded in persuading the Senecas to pledge neutrality and to sign the treaty now known as the Canandaigua Treaty of 1794.

With the tract ceded by that treaty the Senecas secured title to nearly all the land in New York State west of the Genesee River. According to figures published by the New York State legislature it totaled about 4,100,000 acres. And in "consideration of the peace and friendship hereby established" trade goods to the value of ten thousand dollars were distributed and the sum of three thousand was added to the annuity the Senecas were then receiving; all that in addition to the solemn pledge never to disturb the Indians in the peaceful possession of that property.

By our present-day standards 4,100,000 acres of land constitutes a magnificent holding but the Senecas were destined not to be in possession for long. When Phelps and Gorham defaulted the State of Massachusetts prepared suit for recovery of the balance of payment due on the pre-emptive right, but before action was instituted another purchaser became involved. He was Robert Morris of Philadelphia and for the sum of \$225,000 he acquired the right of pre-emption to



all Seneca lands in the State of New York. He reserved a parcel of 500,000 acres along the Genesee River for himself and in 1793 conveyed pre-emption right to the remainder to Herman LeRoy and others who were acting for a group of Amsterdam capitalists now known to us as the Holland Land Company.

In the contract that accompanied transfer of the right Morris pledged to extinguish Indian title to the property and to survey the entire tract. He received an advance payment to bind the contract but a balance of 35,000 pounds sterling (about \$175,000) was not to be paid until he had met the terms agreed upon.

After failing to persuade the Indians to call a council for negotiation of a land sale Morris delegated promotion of the idea to his son, Tom. For several years Tom Morris traveled through Seneca country, lodging with chiefs, attending councils and ingratiating himself generally. He was ready in the summer of 1797 to set his trap. The bait offered was an invitation for the Senecas to attend a grand barbecue at Big Tree, now Geneseo, on the Genesee River. An abundance of food and drink was assured, and presents for all—time set for the affair was August 25, 1797. Indians began arriving a week and more in advance and by the 25th a large crowd was in attendance, sachems, war chiefs, warriors, women, and children, all attracted by the prospect of a good time and by a natural curiosity to learn the object of the assembly.

Tom Morris kindled a council fire which gave formal significance to the occasion and then spoke words of welcome. He introduced Colonel Jeremiah Wadsworth as commissioner for the United States and General Shepherd who represented the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The agent appearing in the interest of the Holland Land Company was William Bayard of New York City.

Both commissioners presented credentials, declared the object of their appointment and assured the Indians that

their interests would be protected and no injustice done them. Tom Morris then talked of the business for which they had been called together; his father desired to purchase their land or such a portion as they would be willing to sell. Much of the wilderness they owned was of little use to them except for hunting, a privilege they would retain should they decide to sell. They would be paid one hundred thousand dollars for the land and could reserve as much as was required for them to live upon. But should those reservations be considered as tracts of unnecessary size a reduction would be made from the offering price of one hundred thousand dollars.

Having made his proposition the council was adjourned and the Indians retired to consider it. They were profoundly troubled, they had no desire to sell land at any price but here again was that pre-emptive right of which they had no understanding other than that it had once before brought disaster to them at the hands of Phelps and Gorham.

Several days passed before the natives returned to the council fire with Chief Farmers Brother as their spokesman. He replied to Morris but his manner was lacking in its usual directness; he made vague objections to a sale yet no forthright refusal. Morris then reviewed his proposal in more detail and asked them not to be too hasty in their deliberations but to consider well the favorable terms being offered. Again the chiefs withdrew and when they returned it was Red Jacket who spoke for them — they had rejected the proposal of a sale.

For a time then the talk was between Morris on one side and Red Jacket opposing him. When the argument had carried on for two weeks the two commissioners became anxious and were inclined to regard the undertaking as hopeless. The cost of the barbecue was climbing. Bayard lost patience and urged Morris to assume a more peremptory attitude and bring the transaction to a head, one way or another;

the commissioners, too, insisted upon decisive steps. Against his better judgment Morris accepted their advice. In council he reminded the Indians that his father was under heavy expense in providing entertainment and that they should have some consideration for his prolonged embarrassment.

Again the natives retired and after thorough discussion reported that they would be willing to sell one township for a dollar an acre which could be sold again for five dollars an acre and a handsome profit realized from which the cost of the conference could be recovered. Morris indignantly rejected the suggestion saying if that was the best they would do it was useless to keep the council fire burning, that they might better rake it up and terminate negotiations.

Red Jacket was quick to agree; he recalled that in the opening remarks Morris had stated that regardless of the result of the conference the Indians could depart in peace with friendly relations between both parties unbroken. Then the chief said, "I now cover the council fire" a figure of speech signifying that the conference had closed by mutual consent. The Indians shouted their approval and were violent in their denunciation of the commissioners and of Tom Morris. Mr. Bayard was mortified at the unexpected result of his experiment and appealed to Morris to make another effort and if possible to have the council fire rekindled. Morris consented provided he could handle the situation without interference from either the agent or the commissioners.

On the following day Chief Farmers Brother called on Morris to express regret over the conduct of the warriors; he hoped it would not "destroy the interest" Morris had "manifested" in the Indians. Morris replied that it would not but went on to say that the demonstration was entirely uncalled for. He had an additional complaint to make; Red Jacket had assumed authority for covering the council fire, according to Indian custom only the one who kindled such a fire had the right to extinguish it.

The chief concurred. Morris had kindled that fire and since he did not cover it he claimed it was still burning and that the conference had not been dissolved but was still in session. Farmers Brother replied that it was so! Morris then requested the Indians to remain a few days longer to enable him to compute the cost of entertainment. They did so. Now we become aware of the fact that the Iroquois were hundreds of years ahead of us in granting women a voice and a vote in public affairs.

We are informed that sachems (civil chiefs) held rank above war chiefs in civil affairs and that war chiefs were above warriors; but that tribal land "belonged to the warriors, because they formed the strength of the nation, and to the women as mothers of the warriors." It was the clan mothers who nominated sachems to office and those women had authority to remove and to replace them.

Understanding that policy, Morris thereafter ignored the sachems and made his appeal to the women. He reminded them of their life of drudgery, explained how they could sell land, invest the money received in payment and live in comfort on the interest — they, their children, and their children's children. He described one hundred thousand dollars in gold coins, how many kegs of a certain size could be filled with them, how many horses would be required to transport such a burden, and how that money could be used to release them from poverty and its enervating evils. The case as he presented it was irresistible; the women revolted against the decision of the sachems and ordered the sale.

All that then remained to be decided was selection of parcels to be reserved for use by Indians. Boundaries of reserved lands were set under direction of Joseph Ellicott for the Holland Land Company; Augustus Porter ran the boundary of Buffalo Creek Reservation in 1798, and James Smedley surveyed a traverse of Buffalo Creek in the same year.

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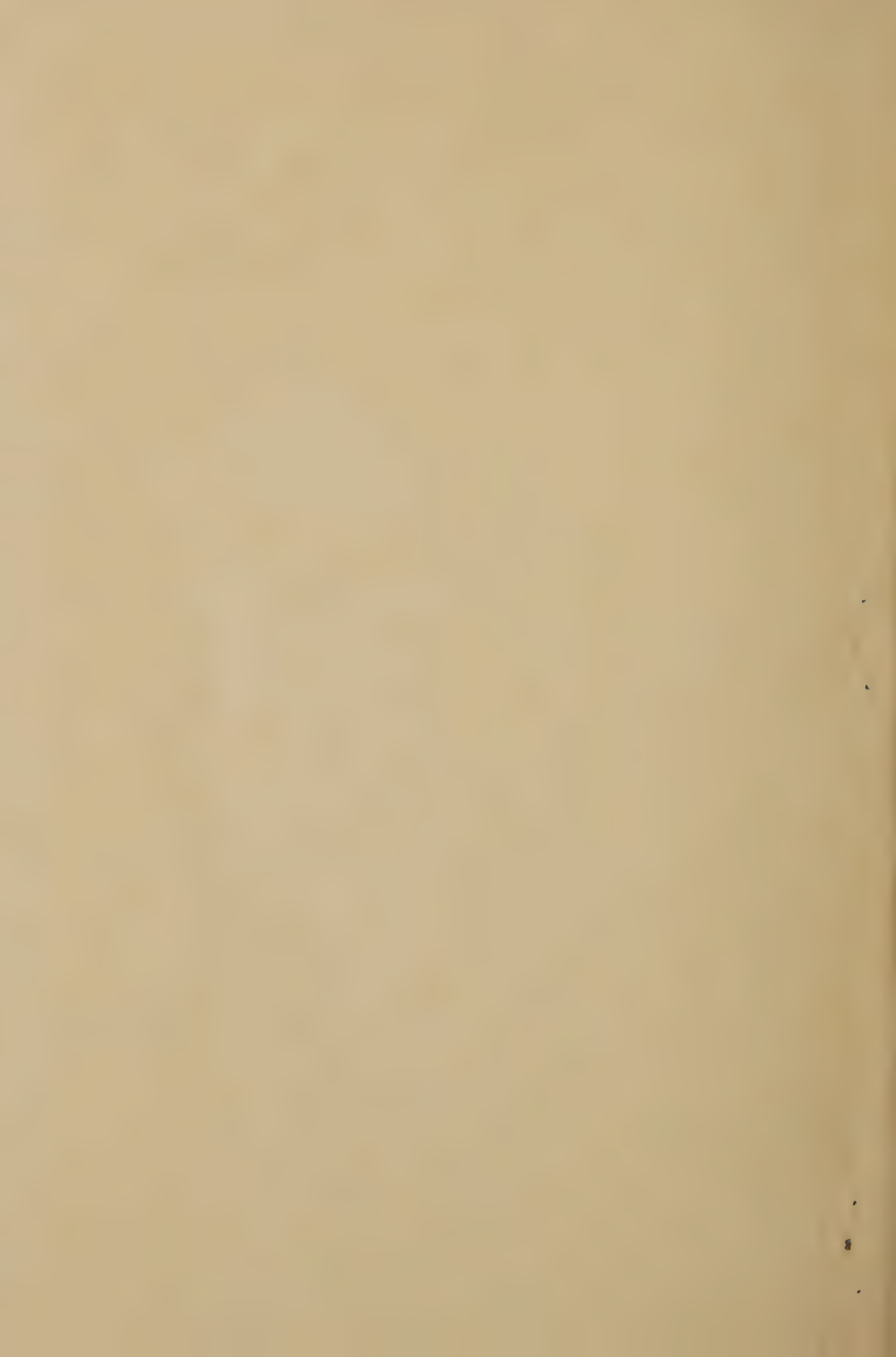
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